



Envision Arlington Standing Committee

Date: Wednesday, September 15, 2021
Time: 7:30 - 9:00 PM
Location: Remote participation via Zoom

Minutes

Members in attendance: Scott Lever, Greg Christiana, Juli Brazile, Alex Bagnall, Jagat Adhiya, Kelly Lynema

Other attendees: Len Diggins (liaison from Select Board), Rebecca Gruber (Chair of Diversity Task Group), Maile Hedlund, Elizabeth Dray

1. Introductions

Introductions all around.

2. Task Group Updates

Rebecca spoke about how DTG is looking at what diversity means to various people and groups within Arlington. Rebecca suggested that after the first CEG meeting, that DTG and CEG work together to try to tackle problems jointly. Greg is excited about this collaboration. Juli voiced interest in joining that collaboration.

Scott discussed engaging with AEF and Superintendent about a unified vision for the entire Arlington Public Schools system.

Scott passed along Michael Brownstein's update on the Police Civilian Advisory Board. First, PCAB will release a report in early October, to be shared at our next Standing Committee meeting. Questions Michael would like answered by the Standing Committee "What information do you believe is important for the study committee? What are your hopes for the study committee?"

Scott gave an update on the processing of the 2021 Annual Town Survey results and comparison to 2019 census data, broken down by various demographics, showing an oversampling of White residents relative to other races, oversampling homeowners vs renters, and oversampling of female respondents.

3. Discuss Civic Engagement

Greg gave an overview of the new task group: Civic Engagement Group (CEG), whose first meeting open to the public is scheduled for September 29. Greg asked for feedback and suggestions on the agenda.

Scott would like to see an agenda item about outreach, specifically for ensuring greater inclusivity. He pointed to how some communities have a dedicated Community Outreach Officer and suggested we look into this possibility.

Scott suggested inviting representatives of the Civic Research Group (CRG) to the next Standing Committee meeting, which Greg will coordinate.

Kelly pointed out the need for updating the Envision Arlington page of the Town website (<http://arlingtonma.gov/envision>) to replace the description of the now defunct Governance Task Group with CEG. Greg has text for this which he will share with Kelly.

Len voiced concerns about the potential for a lack of transparency within CRG if their meetings are not open to the public. Jagat built on this concern, saying that we should make sure that CRG is aligned with the goals of Envision Arlington. Juli suggested that procedurally, it's good for subgroups like CRG to be given assignments at public task group meetings.

Len mentioned that the Town has added Zoom accounts for use by Envision Arlington, e.g. for precinct meetings.

Elizabeth asked whether CRG is subject to Open Meeting Law. Kelly suggested that task groups are subject to that law, while Scott clarified that task groups maintain a value of transparency but are not subject to that law. It was suggested that Town Counsel could offer a more authoritative answer.

Kelly asked whether the Annual Town Survey would be driven from the Standing Committee (as in the past) or from CEG. Len suggested that CEG is just getting started and would likely not be ready to take on the Town Survey this year, and Greg concurred. Consensus appeared to be to keep survey responsibilities with the Standing Committee at least this year.

4. Discussion of Fall 2021 events

Alex made a motion for Envision Arlington to sponsor an event, "Affordable Housing: Ask the Experts," being coordinated by Karen Kelleher scheduled for October 5. Motion was approved unanimously.

Juli gave an update about the Reprecincting Forum for September 22.

Kelly gave an update about the Housing Needs Assessment, and the Housing Plan 2nd Community Forum which was last night. The 3rd Housing Plan Public Meeting will be held on November 9.

5. Budget update

Greg asked about whether there's a standard process for task groups to get reimbursement for resources like website hosting from the Standing Committee. Juli says there's a document that covers that topic which can be shared.

Len clarified that the Town's Zoom accounts for use by Envision Arlington are not coming out of Envision Arlington's budget.

6. Approval of Minutes

To be done at the next meeting.

7. New Business

Len suggested the idea of a question-asking campaign for gathering questions from the public for inclusion in the Town Survey.

Jagat asked about the level of participation from younger demographics like high school students, and whether there's more we could do to outreach to them. Scott suggested improved outreach to high school students. Jagat suggested that for families, schools tend to be a major avenue for engagement.

Kelly reminded everyone to respond about taking the Ethics Certification which is required of all municipal employees, including members of the Standing Committee and task group chairs.

Meeting adjourned at 9:08 PM.